

ENDING THE CIVIL WAR, STARTING THE RECONSTRUCTION

Ten Important Facts About the
Conclusion to and Consequences
of the Civil War, 1861 - 1865

ULYSSES S. GRANT IS IN COMMAND OF THE UNION ARMY — “UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER.”

Abraham Lincoln had a very difficult time identifying a Union general who was talented and perseverant enough to win the Civil War. While outstanding leaders like Albert Sidney Johnson, Joseph Johnson, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson all quickly rose to prominence for the Confederacy, one failed leader after another was replaced by the Union President.

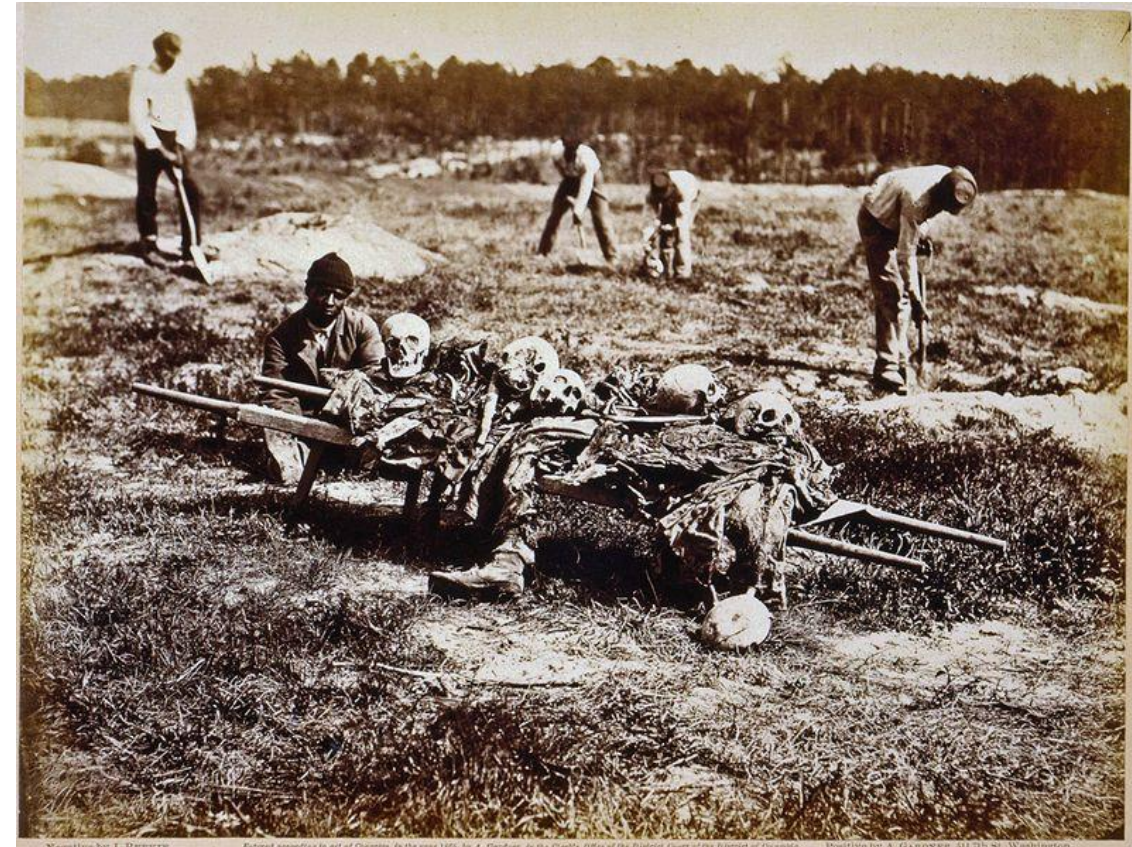
Irvin McDowell was replaced after the Battle of Bull Run. McClellan was replaced for timidity and insubordination. Catastrophic failures by Burnside and Hooker resulted in their ousters, and George Meade was fired for his unwillingness to pursue the enemy after the Battle of Gettysburg. Finally, in 1864, Lincoln found his solution: Ulysses S. Grant. Victorious at Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, Shiloh, Corinth, and Vicksburg, Grant was known for his indefatigable efforts toward victory and his unwillingness to negotiate with the enemy. He demanded “Unconditional Surrender.”



THE BATTLE OF COLD HARBOR, VIRGINIA

“AROUND THE LEFT FLANK, AROUND THE LEFT FLANK”

Ulysses S. Grant's strategy was to go after Robert E. Lee's Army of Northern Virginia relentlessly. He did not concern himself with capturing Richmond for the time being. He assumed that by defeating Lee's Army, the capture of Richmond would become superfluous. And he would use his advantages – in men, in weaponry, in transportation, and in morale – to defeat Lee. Each time they met, casualties were high. But Grant could replace Union soldiers who fell. Almost 200,000 African-American soldiers were eager to fight for their own freedom. Lee couldn't replace anyone. By the end of the war, men over the age of 65 and boys scarcely in their teens were fighting...



PETERSBURG, VIRGINIA AND “THE CRATER”

After Confederate forces set fortifications around Petersburg – the southern gateway into the city of Richmond – a long standoff began. The fighting here predicted the trench-warfare style which would emerge during World War I.

Union soldiers attempted to outsmart the Confederates. A group of soldiers who had worked as coal miners before the war tunneled under the Confederate lines, and packed the area beneath the Rebel lines with dynamite. When they lit the fuse, a horrifying explosion blasted a hole in the Confederate lines. But when Union soldiers rushed forward in the confusion which followed the blast, they found themselves trapped in the massive crater they themselves had created. It was another bloody catastrophe for the Union.



WILLIAM TECUMSEH SHERMAN'S "MARCH TO THE SEA" FROM ATLANTA TO SAVANNAH, 1864 - 1865



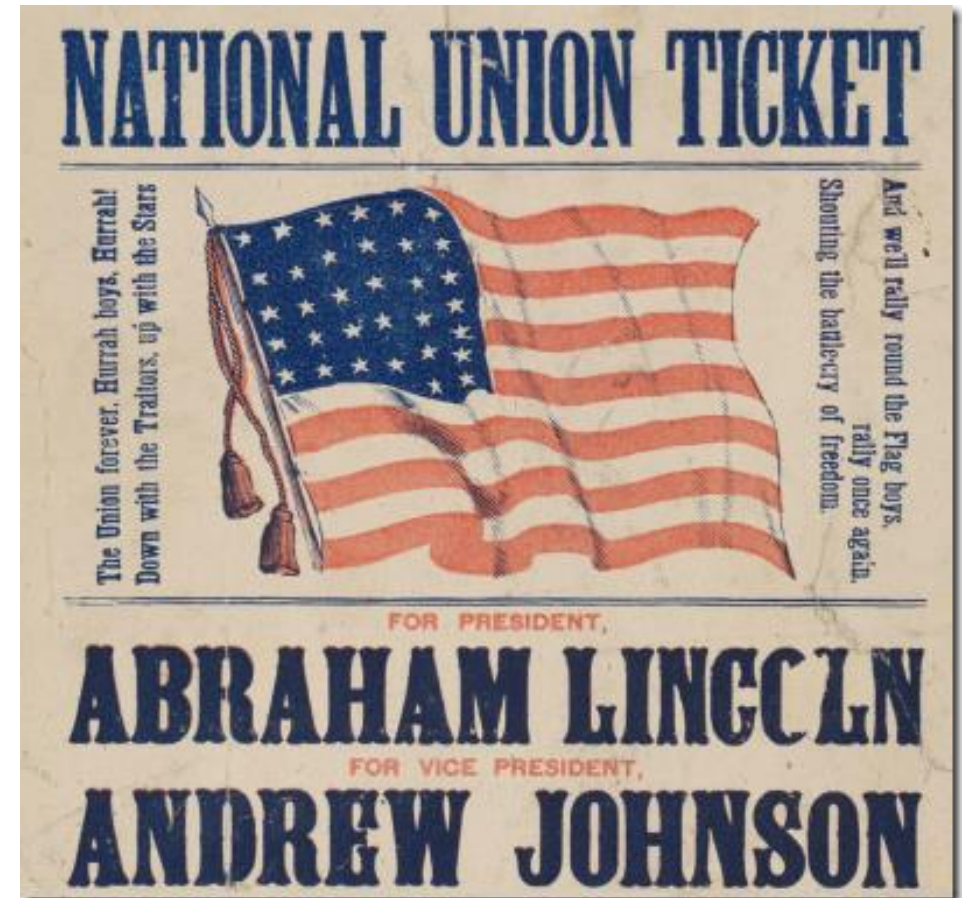
General William Tecumseh Sherman set fire to every residence, every business, every barn, every outhouse, every chicken coop, and every building he laid eyes on in Georgia. He tore up all the railroad tracks, slaughtered every animal he encountered, and set fire to stockpile of grain. His goal was to make the South suffer, and he succeeded. Georgian howled in protest, but to no avail. Sherman's tactics – leaving his supply lines to wage 'total war' – were innovative. Many historians believe his success saved Lincoln's Presidency in the fall of 1864 – an Election year.

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1864

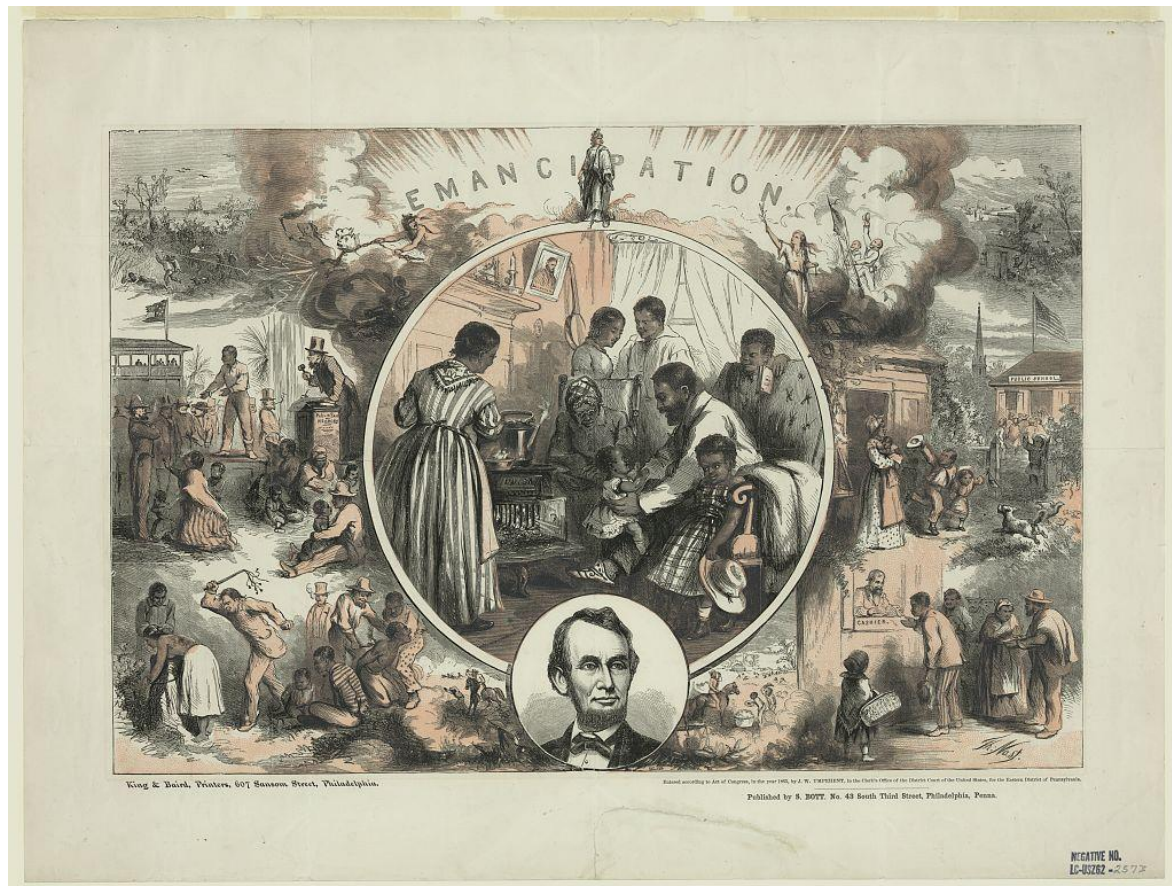
In 1864, Abraham Lincoln was challenged by the man he had fired as the leader of the Army of the Potomac – George McClellan.

In the summer of 1864, as the bloody war raged slowly on, many people – including Lincoln – assumed that the Democrats would win the White House. But a series of victories by the Union Army – particularly the successes of Grant and Sherman – reinvigorated the North. The vast majority of soldiers who were furloughed to vote that fall cast their ballots for Abraham Lincoln.

Had McClellan won, it is likely that the war would have ended with a negotiated settlement, and that slavery might have survived. But he lost...



THE RATIFICATION OF THE 13TH AMENDMENT



The ratification of the 13th Amendment took place in the spring of 1865 – just before the Civil War officially came to a close.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation had freed all slaves in parts of the South still in rebellion – “now, henceforward, and forever” – it was of dubious constitutionality. Even Lincoln feared it may be put in reverse if the war came to an end before an amendment to the Constitution was ratified.

Happily, it was never put to the test. The Thirteenth Amendment banned slavery in the United States, and every Confederate state was required to ratify the amendment before it could be re-admitted into the United States.

THE FALL OF RICHMOND, APRIL 1865

In early April of 1865, the Confederate capital finally surrendered to the Union. Richmond had suffered horribly during the war. Not only were the buildings and infrastructure of the city destroyed, but also, the city was starving and without medicine or supplies.

Abraham Lincoln came to Richmond in order to walk through the Confederate capital city in the early part of April, 1865. He would go on from there to visit the carnage of the battlefield near Petersburg, Virginia, as well.

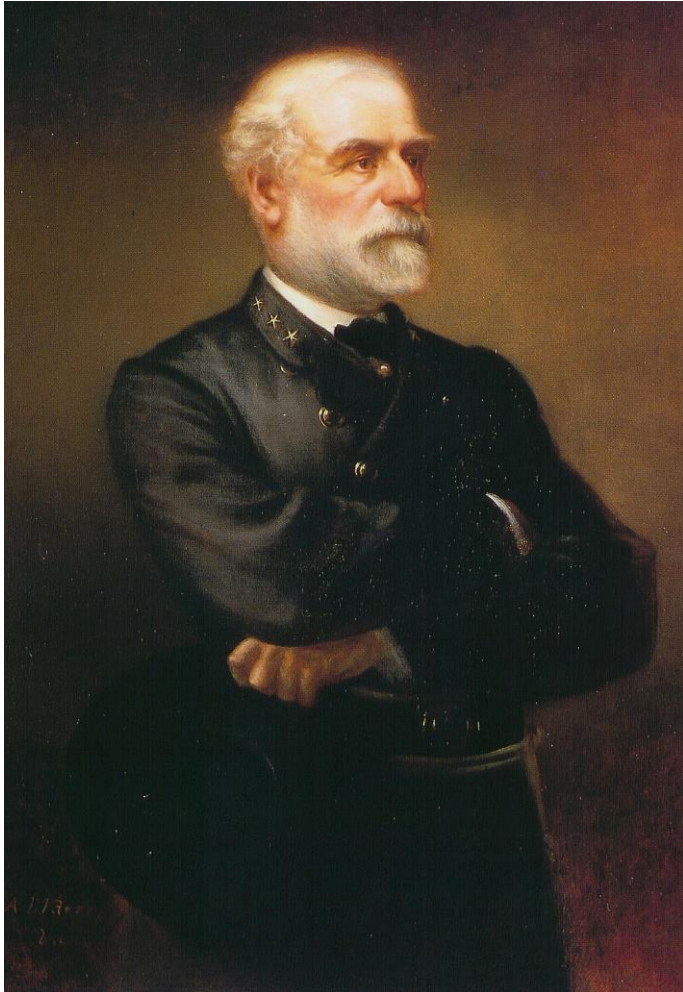


SURRENDER AT APPOMATTOX COURT HOUSE

On Palm Sunday, April 9th, 1865, Robert E. Lee came to visit Ulysses S. Grant at Appomattox Court House, Virginia. Grant, whose nickname was “Unconditional Surrender” for his reluctance to grant the enemy any mercy, was unusually sympathetic to Lee and his men. Recognizing that the surrender of Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia was the end of the war and the beginning of the Reconstruction, he ordered that his men should treat their former enemies with respect. Grant sent tens of thousands of rations to Lee’s Army, refused to allow his men to celebrate the surrender, and even allowed the Confederates to take their horses, mules, and weapons. He understood that it was planting time and that many of these men had families to provide for. Small acts of compassion like these allowed the nation to heal.



THE LEGACY OF ROBERT E. LEE



Robert E. Lee was the hero of the Confederacy to the end of the war. After accepting terms of surrender, he insisted that his men return to their former country. Lee might have had his men run for the hills – to fight a guerrilla style war for decades to come. But he did not. He advised his men to go home, and to become good citizens.

Lee was not taken prisoner. In fact, virtually no one was from the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis was briefly imprisoned, but then released. The only Confederate officer to be placed on trial for war crimes and then executed was Henry Wirz – the notorious commander of the Andersonville death camp in Georgia.

Lee would go on to become the President of Washington College in Lexington, Virginia. He served there for the remainder of his life.



Abraham Lincoln was shot on Good Friday, April 14th, 1865, while watching a play at Ford's Theatre, called "Our American Cousin." Lincoln's assassination was not an isolated incident. Attempts were made to murder the Vice President Andrew Johnson and the Secretary of States William Seward on the same night. Only Lincoln was shot. He died the following morning. When he died, the Vice President Andrew Johnson succeeded him to the Presidency. Johnson was both a Southerner and a Democrat, and many Americans had grave misgivings about the nation's future.

LINCOLN'S ASSASSINATION

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE AMERICAN SOUTH



The Reconstruction is the period of time between 1865 and 1877 during which the former Confederacy was rebuilt – both physically and socially.

The Freedman's Bureau helped African-Americans to find work and secure a living wage so they could access food, water, and shelter.

Since Andrew Johnson was both a Southerner and a Democrat, the Congress – led by Radical Republicans like Thaddeus Stevens – took control of the process.

The Union Army occupied the South. The 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendment ended slavery, granted citizenship to former slaves, and gave African-American men the right to vote.

Unfortunately the changes would come to a dramatic halt around the year 1877.